- Event Focuses on Small Hydro and Tidal Power -

Wappingers Falls, NY - With electricity prices on the rise this year in New York, U.S. Representative John Hall (D-NY19) today hosted the fourth in his series of energy independence forums. Each of Hall's energy independence forums has highlighted a different form of renewable energy. Today's event spotlighted the use of small hydro and tidal power.

"Our reliance on the old energy sources has created a growing crisis over the last several years, which is now coming to bear directly on our daily lives. It manifests itself in spiking gas prices, higher home energy costs, dirtier air, polluted water, and increasingly extreme weather. If we don't take bold action, these problems are only going to get worse."

The House version of the comprehensive Energy Bill that the House of Representatives and Senate are currently negotiating in conference made important investments in hydropower technology. The legislation included language to lay the groundwork for tidal and marine power by studying the environmental parameters of siting new facilities. The bill also included incremental hydro in the Renewable Energy Standard, and instituted a production tax credit for hydrokinetic and marine power.

The House also took historic action by passing an amendment to establish a nationwide Renewable Energy Standard (RES). Hall has cosponsored a bill that would establish a 20% RES, and the provision added to the energy bill would require 15% of our nation's electricity to produced by renewables by 2020.

"The boost that this would give to the solar, wind, biomass, hydropower, and efficiency industries would create thousands of jobs, serve as a boon to our economy, and put us on the fast track to fighting climate change," said Hall.

Nationally, conventional hydropower makes up just over 7% of electrical generation. New York is the fourth biggest hydro state in the country, with a capacity of 2861 MW. A 2006 study by The Idaho National Laboratory and USGS found that there are 1,967 "small" (between 1MW and 30MW) hydro sites in New York alone, and 1,244 MW available at "low power" (less than 1MW) sites. Overall, New York has the potential to increase its hydropower output by 26%.

"Some people may look at the hydropower technology our presenters are going to discuss today, or wind turbines, or solar panels, or a hybrid car and ask how they can deal with a problem as massive as global warming," said Hall. "I would say to them that it's exactly these technologies that are going to help us get out in front of the challenge of global warming. With a problem this big, there's a temptation to look for silver bullet solutions or to find one big fix for one big problem. But that's not the way to move forward. There is no silver bullet solution to global warming. A multitude of small changes added up can make a big, big difference. Hydropower holds the potential to be one of those pieces to our climate puzzle. Exploring new ways to use hydropower can help to reduce our reliance on polluting coal and lessen our need for gas powered generation."

Hall is the only member of the New York delegation to serve as a member of the Select

Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming in the House of Representatives. Other forums in Hall's energy independence series have highlighted wind power, solar energy, and biofuels.

"It is my hope that these forums will help the Hudson Valley to become a leader in the production and use of small hydro power and other new energy sources. We need to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and bring down the high cost of electricity, because it is hitting families where it hurts—in their pocketbooks," said Hall.
Today's forum, moderated by Town of Wappinger Supervisor Joseph Ruggiero, opened with a report from Hall on Congressional efforts to promote energy independence and invest in renewable energy, especially hydro power.

Sarah Bower, President of the Wappingers Falls Hydro-Electric Company, then explained how one of the Hudson Valley's small hydro plants works, including its history, how much it contributes to the energy grid, and how small hydro plants can help us on our path to energy independence. Ken Kleinpeter, the Director of Farm and Facilities at Glynwood Farm, talked about how to overcome the technological and regulatory hurdles he has faced in his determined efforts to set up a small hydro plant to power a farm and conference center. Lastly, Joseph H. Sayer, Senior Project Manager at NYSERDA, discussed new technologies, specifically an innovative pilot project which uses small 35kw turbines in the East River to power a large grocery.

"New York has some of the highest electricity rates in the country," said Hall. "We need to explore how harnessing energy from the waterways here in the Hudson Valley can bring down our electricity costs in a clean, renewable way."

New innovations are beginning to capture the power of natural water movement, including waves and temperature shifts. Small local hydro plants take advantage of New York's network of rivers and lakes and streams to provide environmentally friendly energy. The new hydrokinetic power facility in the East River uses turbines and advanced technology to catch the power of water movement while monitoring fish and plant life in the river.

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